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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Promising Youth Program Continues to Make Its Mark on the Community United Way Youth Leadership Committee Release RFP's for Grants Related to Teen Issues in Southern Litchfield County

NEW MILFORD, CT (February 12, 2008) – What better way to affect change in your community than to get involved in funding programs that address issues of concern to you? That's exactly what members of the United Way's Youth Leadership Program are doing. The group, made up of 30 teens from around Southern Litchfield County, has released its 2008-2009 Youth Leadership Venture Funding Program request for proposals to area agencies. The grants, altogether totaling \$4,000, are designed to focus on three areas that the group has deemed critical concerns to teenagers in Southern Litchfield County:

1. Communications designed to promote a positive image of youth in the communities and inform youth of activities or opportunities of interest or value to them (such as events, jobs, etc.).
2. Activities for middle and high school youth designed to promote healthy activity choices as alternatives to parties, watching TV and other sedentary or risky behaviors, and to promote opportunities for youth from different communities or schools to interact.
3. Programs to encourage opportunities for high school youth to serve as peer mentors to middle school youth. Mentoring suggestions included opportunities for peer conflict mediation and transition support from middle school to high school.

This year marks the United Way Youth Leadership Venture Funding Program's 13th year of offering funding resources to agencies that focus on providing services to youth in Southern Litchfield County.

A dinner will be held on March 3rd to award grant recipients and to recognize members of the Youth Leadership who have successfully completed the program. The 7 pm dinner will take place at All Aboard Restaurant, 14 Railroad Street, New Milford.

Previous grant awards have included:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Issue</u>
Survive the Drive	Youth Leadership/NMCAN	Drive Safety
Faces Program	Women's Center	Self-esteem, bullying
Respect Me, Names Project	NMHS/HC 2020	Bullying
Mock Car Crash	MADD/SADD Club	Substance abuse prevention
Open Gym	NM Park and Rec/Youth Agency	Recreation
Youth Forum	NMCAN/NM Youth Agency	Recreation
Student Assistance Program	NMHS/NM Hospital Beh Health	Substance abuse prevention
Empowering Young Women	Housatonic Youth Services	Women's Issues

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The Youth Leadership Program

A desire to serve in the community and gain valuable leadership skills is what has motivated young people to apply to United Way's Youth Leadership Program for over 13 years. Thirty high school students from Southern Litchfield County participate annually in the program, which typically has a waiting list of youth interested in joining.

Teens participating in the program attend Camp Sloane in Lakeville, CT to become oriented to the program and to bond as a team. They are exposed to seminars on developing confidence, public speaking, presentation skills and leading meetings effectively. Additionally the teens participate in team building exercises.

The youth leadership team researches the needs of young people in our community during the fall. A priority list is then developed and a Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued to area non-profits. Grants of up to \$1,500 are issued by the leadership team.

During the year youth leaders also serve as volunteers at a variety of community events, such as the annual Back to School Clothing Drive, Food Drives, and Bike Day.

For more information on United Way's Youth Leadership Program in Southern Litchfield County, contact Giles Vaughn at (203) 565-1723.

The United Way of Western Connecticut was formed on July 1 with the merger of United Way of Northern Fairfield County, Housatonic/Shepaug United Way, and United Way of Stamford. It will distribute close \$4 million to benefit human service programs and community initiatives within the three regional areas of Northern Fairfield County, Southern Litchfield County, and Stamford. The towns covered within these regions are Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Kent, New Fairfield, Newtown, New Milford, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, Sherman, Stamford, Warren and Washington.

The United Way of Western Connecticut is a leader in mobilizing resources to improve lives and our communities. They bring together community leaders, nonprofit organizations, volunteers and businesses to focus on the most pressing needs in our community and provides the resources – human, technical and financial – to get to the heart of problems.